

MAKING OF AN OFFICER

Life of a West-Point Cadet

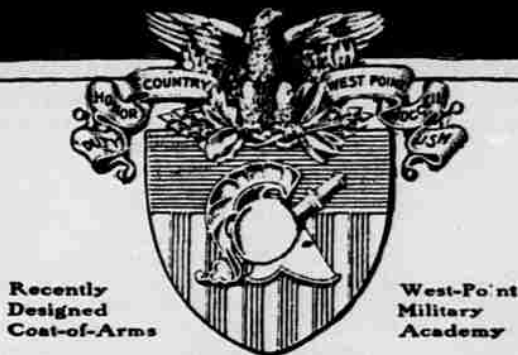


By H. J. W. Dam

THE one hundred twenty-four young officers who will be graduated from West-Point next Wednesday will receive their diplomas with exultation as well as with a sense of great relief. In a way they will resemble prisoners who have been serving a term of four years of close confinement. The glory and glamour of an officer's career appeal strongly to the youthful imagination of the country—and it is well for the country that they do so—but the rigidity, severity and strain of the West-Point course are known only to those who have experienced it.

As a military college it is unique among its kind, and all experts, including officers representing the English, French and German armies, have declared, with admiration, that it is the first of its class in the world.

Its atmosphere is continuously and invariably astonishing. It is an atmosphere of absolute obedience without the least touch of servility; of command without the least savor of superiority. Externally one perpetually is reminded of a tour through a prison. Captain Exton, your guide, opens the door of a cadets' room in the barracks. Two fine-looking young men of the fourth, or lowest, class, in gray fatigue uniforms, are seated at two small wooden tables, studying. As the officer enters they rise and stand erect in their places, looking straight ahead. You are in the room for perhaps fifteen minutes, inspecting their belongings, poking about among their lockers, examining the neckties, photographs and souvenirs on the top shelf of each locker, and all this time they stand like wooden statues, looking straight ahead, without a word or a movement of any kind. They are not permitted to



Recently
Designed
Coat-of-Arms

West-Point
Military
Academy



Photograph Taken at the Academy in 1903

GOV.	SECY.	PRESIDENT	SECY.	COMDT.
ODELL	ROOT	ROOSEVELT	MOODY	MILLS

Dress Parade of Cadets

address an officer except to ask some needed question. As you look at them standing thus, their silent humility makes you think of the automaton-like attitude of two experienced convicts in a penitentiary cell.

But there is nothing of the convict in their manner. They are proud, manly, forceful, themselves commanders in embryo, yielding willing accord to rules the value of which they fully understand. And the command of the officer, exercised variously in the course of the tour, is tempered by a tact and a courtesy as unique in its ways as the silent obedience which it meets. Here all the enthusiasm, freedom, independence and self-assertion that particularly characterize young American manhood have disappeared. Discipline is King. But

over all is a charming sense that all are equal; that all are gentlemen; that commanded and commanding are dominated by the same deep respect for a system whose logical value is admitted without reservation by all.

Coming as they do from all sections of the country, from all grades of society and of social experience, from the mansion of the millionaire and the home of the skilled laborer or widowed dress-maker, as may be, they are, as an entering class, the most diverse and incongruous collection of personalities known to any scholastic institution. And from this extreme of diversity is to be developed the extreme of similarity, that honorable extreme expressed by the phrase "an officer and a gentleman."

The pressure toward homogeneity begins at once. All are clad in the same gray uniform, carefully cut and neatly fitted. Their heads of hair, representing all the diversity of personal views which prevail from Maine to Arizona, Tacoma to Texas, get the



Saber Exercises in Camp



Cadets at Hurdle Jumping